

Bevin Brothers Bell Shops
Bevin Court
East Hampton
Middlesex County
Connecticut

HAER No. CT-12

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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Location: On Bevin's Court, overlooking Bevin's Pond, in East Hampton, Middlesex County, Connecticut.

Date of Erection: 1832; with major additions 1880, 1904-1910, 1925, & 1932.

Present Owner: Bevin Brothers Manufacturing Company
Bevin's Court
East Hampton, CT

Present Use: Bell Factory (original use)

Significance: The Bevin Brothers Bell Factory is the best preserved of the East Hampton bell works, and the only one still used for its original purpose.

The focus of bell manufacturing in East Hampton was a conjunction of happenstance and fortuitous choice. William Barton moved to East Hampton, probably from Springfield, MA, and established a sleigh and handbell shop in 1808. His workmen opened shops when they were able to do so, and in turn trained others. Casting and finishing procedures for bell making were applied to other products as well (such as coffin trimmings), but the majority of East Hampton shops made bells. By the 1830's the area had a substantial skill base in the field.

Abner and Chauncey Bevin started their business in 1832, located in a 2 & 1/2 story, 32' by 20' frame building with a gable roof and vertical board siding. The shop was originally located at the former outlet of Bevin's pond, several hundred yards northwest of its present site. The pond was expanded in the mid-1860's when a new dam was constructed downstream on Pocotopang Creek. The frame building was relocated next to the new brick factory at the new outlet.

New construction in 1880 and 1904-1910 replaced the 1860's buildings. Brick structures erected in 1880 include a 2 & 1/2 story factory, 188' by 48', with a gable roof, a 1 & 1/2 story foundry, 161' by 31', with a near-flat roof, and two smaller buildings for tumbling, finishing, packing and storage. The firm added two 2 story brick factories (83' by 72' and 98' by 37') in 1904, and in 1905 a 1 story, 176' by 26' wing of poured concrete was added to the 1880 wing. The Japanning shop (1910), shipping room (1925), and office wing (1932), completed the plant.

(continued)

The Bevin family still owns and operates the company. They continued to produce the cast brass bells until 1979 with brass manufactured in the old 19th century pit furnaces. These were only a small part of the company output, as most modern production is stamped from sheet stock.

References: Roth, Matthew; Connecticut: An Inventory of Historic Engineering and Industrial Sites, Society of Industrial Archeology, 1981.

The casting process was videotaped in 1979 by the Brass Workers History Project and is on file at the Mattatuck Museum at Waterbury, CT. The firm also donated a pit furnace crucible and associated hand tools to the museum.

Transmitted by: Kevin Murphy, Historian HAER, June 1984.